

They'll know
we are Christians
by our love.

marcia's poem

Chud care

unfold in word for salvation &
liberation of others.

Speaks to Pharisees -

Hear God call you to walk
Hear God upset the law &
do things God's way.

We have logical reasons - irrelevant
only one ~~code~~ ^{principle} abides -
God's input & our being
open to it.

Need to listen - inner voice
Where H/S leads.

Vehicles for unfolding of God's
liberating force for others.

Choose to listen / turn away
Choose to commit

Revolution of love -

Not a political group, messengers of Christ
working for the unfolding of God's will -

Recognize, do not persecute us

A new law being
unto you.
Render unto Caesar
that which is
Caesar's.

Revolution of love -
Love liberates

Sheep in the Midst of Wolves

THE MINISTER AND CRISIS:

In dealing with the homosexual man or woman who is undergoing a spiritual crisis about his/her homosexuality, there are two primary points to be made.

1. The person is loved by God, despite his/her actions.
2. No sin is unforgiveable -- and sexuality need not even be sin.

Generally, the person who comes to MCC in a spiritual crisis regarding homosexuality is feeling that s/he is totally condemned by God (and by society and by him/herself) and that s/he is cast out and unsalvageable. Very often the people we see are undergoing a crisis provoked by having gone to see their own pastors regarding their homosexuality. They are, in effect, the "basket-cases" of Christianity. It is their very deep Christian beliefs which have provoked the crisis. Additionally, guilt has been laid on them from an outside source, i.e. their minister. Many are extremely upset, some suicidal, some exceedingly depressed.

~~First~~, ^Permitting them to talk out the anger they feel at being rejected and hurt by the minister's attitude is our primary task. They are rightfully upset and need to know this. When a person goes to a minister with a problem, our first task is to listen -- to hear what they are saying to us -- and to hear it non-judgmentally. This is a real problem for us.

Secondly, there is an ethical problem. We cannot condemn the other Christian minister for his/her attitude. Many know nothing about homosexuality in vivo. They have only read -- and usually what they have read, particularly if they are fundamentalists, is often damaging, degrading, or presents homosexuality as disgusting. Nevertheless, while the other minister cannot be attacked, the

person coming to us needs to know that this attitude is by no means universal, and that many ministers will deal with the problem in a positive, reassuring, and even comforting way. Sometimes, too, it helps to point out where the other minister is coming from in his/her life. We are all at different places in our lives, have every right to be where we are, and need to have that right affirmed.

Third: The person needs to be able to identify alternatives. What are the negatives involved in his/her homosexuality; what are the positives. Is the homosexuality and attendant problems cause of enough ^{anxiety} ~~problems~~ that the person should seek professional help; is it a minor crisis which talking out will help; ~~what~~, is it a long-standing problem that referral to a Homosexual counseling center will benefit? Is it a spiritual crisis that the minister can help with?

Fourth: The person should be encouraged to explore alternatives. What are some of the tension-releasing activities he/she can engage in? Would attending MCC or Dignity or Integrity help them to see that others have been and are in the same place. Would talking to someone at HCCS help? Explore those. Go see some of the people. If it is a coming out problem, engage in some of the less threatening activities -- don't just sit and sweat -- but meet others who have dealt with the same problems and have arrived at some kind of peace with themselves. Do some research: Read some of the literature available on the matter. Ralph Blair -- Troy's book -- George Weinberg -- The Homosexual Matrix -- Lesbian Woman. Many of these books will provide additional information for the person who is first coming to grips with the problem.

Then let's talk about it again. Call me if you need to talk. Come back and see me. Come to service, and experience God's love in community.

Another crisis we see at MCC is the person who has run afoul of the law and is frightened. Someone arrested for public activity, or for dealing with an underaged person, or for some activity which has brought him/her to the attention of the police.

Coming up against the law is anxiety provoking for all of us. For the gay person, it has additional terrors: Will my family need to find out? Will my employer find out? Many of these people have been "closet" gays, and probably either undergoing "coming out" or have been extremely circumspect about letting anyone know who they are and what their connection with homosexuality is. If you will -- the T-room people, who are generally the ones who get into difficulty with the police/ or the hustlers -- which is an altogether different story -- are very, very fearful of people finding out. They are most peripheral to the gay world, most threatened by it. Here our task is to be extremely comforting and to help them realize that being discovered is not the end of the world, and that possibly it is a beginning -- maybe even a beginning they really wanted -- and that being discovered by the police, having their families find out, may be just the solution to the guilt and pressure of hiding that they have been seeking and that possibly there was something in their psyche which led them to provoke "uncloseting." And -- that this may be a sign of health -- that the time of hiding which has been upsetting them is coming to an end -- and that their sexuality may now have a more open, less dangerous, and more fruitful area in which to operate. Police involvement need not be the worst thing that happens to one -- albeit it is not the best. We then need to maintain contact, and see the person through the court and possibly even prison experience, so that self-image and self-worth are not totally destroyed.

The other side of the involvement with the law -- the hustlers, rarely call us when they are first apprehended. Often they will, however, get in touch with us from inside the prison and seek counseling prior to release. MCC's prison ministry then will go to work to assist them.

A third crisis situation exists when a very dependent person is going through separation -- breakup of a relationship. And here, just as one would with a heterosexual marriage which was breaking up, one needs to deal with the

interactions of the couple, their interest in extending or repairing the relationship, and support of the more dependent person through the first weeks of the break up. For many gays, breaking up a relationship -- because of the intensity of the dependency and because of the great gulf of loneliness which many gays experience outside of relationships, provokes ^{RAGE} intense depression, even suicide, and ~~often rage~~. ~~This~~ ^P rage can be experienced against the partner, against property, and against oneself. It leads to self-destructive behavior -- acting out -- in violence, in alcoholism, in sexual abandon. Many, many kinds of extreme behavior are exhibited.

The primary task here is to ^{help the person} modify the acting out behavior. Give the person a place to let off the steam, cry it out, exhaust some of the rage; then to think through why the breakup is producing so much rage. Often a very hurt and angry human being -- one who has just been through more than a fragile psychological system can bear -- is uncovered. This person usually needs -- and often will not seek -- professional help. It is our task then to assist this person to realize the depth of his/her need, the severity of the problem in that it is touching too many parts of his/her life -- work, relationship, friendships, etc. and his need to come to grips. In this situation we can be supportive -- and sometimes help in heading the person to therapy, but more often, the person will just hurt until anew relationship is begun, and the pattern repeats and repeats ^{ultimate} endlessly. Our/task here is to help the person seek professional assistance.

Probably unique to women -- although some gay fathers go through it -- is the crisis Lesbian mothers come in with. Usually this is a situation in which the woman has been heterosexually married, is in the process of divorce, and the husband is now seeking custody of the children. Here the mother is agonizing over the need to keep her children with her -- the threats of the husband to remove them -- and the punitive attitude displayed by the husband. Often there is a counter thread of the woman's lover who is not sure whether she does or does not want

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the children. Our task here, it seems to me, is twofold. One to refer the mother to appropriate legal assistance. Lambda Legal and Educational Service, the ACLU, and other agencies are willing to assist Lesbian mothers to fight in the courts for their children. Test cases, for example, are actively being sought by Lambda. Legal assistance is the mother's first need.

Her second need is for information. Here, referral to a lesbian mother's group such as Dykes and Tykes, or the Lesbian Mothers rap groups can put her in touch with others who have been through the problem and who have either information or support of an emotional nature while she is undergoing the crisis.

As ministers, we need to help her think out her relationships with her lover, her children, her family -- often by listening to her story we can find ways to offer emotional support, and a climate of acceptance for her and her child/ren. She will need to work through her anger, her fear, and her anxiety over losing the child. She may need to think about alternatives. What happens if she loses the child, what happens if she has visiting rights, what happens if she gets the child. She may need referral to a women's shelter -- in the case where the husband may be physically abusive. She may need financial assistance, and referral to welfare and information about how to go about opening a claim may be forthcoming. She may need temporary housing until she can resettle. We are the logical place for her to turn, and we need to be prepared to be the church in Diakonos for her.

The kinds of crisis situations we see at MCC are primarily those of people who are avowedly gay, and who are going through transitions in their lives. We have much work to do in helping with those transitions. Straight people have many, many, outlets and resources when they experience difficulties. Gays have relatively few, most of these resources are poorly funded, and carried on by people with only minimal training in either social work or counseling. We need to be better prepared

to do the task to which we are called.

The "straight" pastor may need to know that he/she has a colleague in the gay religious movement, who may have value as a consultant in dealing with gay people and their problems. For the straight pastor to just say -- What you are doing is wrong, is no help. Probably no one feels more that it is wrong than the person who is Christian and undergoing coming out. There is a lot more to be said. Let us hope that we can learn to say it in meaningful ways: God loves you. We care about you. There is help and you need not be so frightened. First and foremost: We need to ask -- what would you like us to do? And then listen.

